

EDITOR'S NOTE: Senator Cardin writes periodic columns for Maryland publications. The following column about recent passage of the Children's Health Insurance Program may be of interest to your readers. Please contact Susan Sullam at susan_sullam@cardin.senate.gov if you have any questions.

***PRECEDENCE:** Senator Cardin is a member of five Senate committees: Foreign Relations, Judiciary, Environment and Public Works, Budget, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship. His web site is: cardin.senate.gov. He also can be found at YouTube.com/SenatorCardin*

**CONGRESS AND PRESIDENT WORK TOGETHER TO IMPROVE
HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN
By U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin**

After a nearly two-year fight to gain passage of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), I am pleased that the legislation is now law thanks to strong bipartisan congressional support and forceful backing from President Obama.

This legislation, which was vetoed twice by President Bush, will assure continued funding for the approximately 6.7 million American children already enrolled in the program. It also will expand health care services to approximately 4 million additional children from low-income families who do not qualify for Medicaid and who would otherwise be uninsured.

In Maryland, this bill will fully fund the 110,000 children currently enrolled in the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP). It also will provide funding to expand health coverage to approximately 42,800 Maryland children who are currently uninsured.

Too many Americans have no insurance, but this bill takes a step in the right direction by ensuring that millions of uninsured children will have access to the health care services they need.

I am extremely proud that the CHIP reauthorization bill includes my proposals to provide a guaranteed dental benefit, a dental education program for parents of newborns and a new Department of Health and Human Services website and toll-free number with information about dental coverage and a list of providers.

Dental care is an essential part of appropriate medical care. As our former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop once said, "There is no health without oral health."

In 2007, we learned how true that was with the tragic death of 12-year-old Deamonte Driver from Prince George's County who died from a brain infection caused by a tooth abscess. Treating a cavity takes very little time or effort, but the death of a child from tooth decay is a national tragedy that we must make sure never happens again.

I am pleased that the reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program will ensure we have no more tragedies like Deamonte Driver.

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